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DE RUEHSG #2344 3121906
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 081906Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0348
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 2723
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 3385
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 3307
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1172
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ NOV 4886
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 4803
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 1110
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 3427

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 002344

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/08/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SMIG](#) [CI](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR COUNTERS BACHELET'S COMPARISON OF
BORDER FENCE TO BERLIN WALL

REF: SANTIAGO 2323

Classified By: Ambassador Craig A. Kelly for reasons 1.4 (b & d)

11. (C) Summary. President Bachelet has very publicly drawn parallels between the recently approved U.S. border fence with Mexico and the Berlin Wall (reftel). The Ambassador expressed his concern over her comments to Paulina Veloso, Secretary General of the Presidency, and Foreign Minister

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Foxley. The Ambassador put the fence in the context of a package of immigration reform. Chilean officials responded the GOC had "softened" the fence-related language in the Iberoamerican Summit statement but defended Bachelet's remarks. End Summary.

Berlin Wall - A Cheap Shot

12. (U) At the Iberoamerican Conference in Uruguay on November 5, President Bachelet strongly condemned the partial border fence the USG plans to build along its border with Mexico. She compared the fence to the Berlin Wall saying, "After the fall of walls that impeded people from leaving their own countries, the construction of walls to prevent entrance calls into question the spirit of friendship and cooperation that should govern the relationship between states." Bachelet's comments received wide press play in Chile, in part because Bachelet lived in East Germany for several years in exile.

13. (C) In a conversation with Paulina Veloso, Secretary General of the Presidency on November 6, the Ambassador told Veloso such a comparison was baseless and out-of-bounds. He explained that a wall which prevents people from leaving a country is a tool of oppression, whereas a wall that prevents unauthorized people from entering a sovereign state is a protective measure. Separating the wall from the rest of the immigration reform package (with its generous benefits for immigrants) unfairly portrays the measure as inhumane. The Ambassador repeated these points in a November 7 meeting with Foreign Minister Alejandro Foxley and the Foreign Ministry's Director General of External Relations Carlos Portales. Portales assured the Ambassador that Chile had worked to make the language of the Iberoamerican Summit statement on the border fence "softer" and more diplomatic. That being said, Veloso, Foxley, and Portales, all emphasized their deep concern at the whole concept of the U.S. border fence, noting "the optics are so bad." "At a time when the world is

opening up, it seems a contradiction to build a wall," Foxley continued. The Ambassador emphasized that no country in history has welcomed immigrants the way the U.S. has. Foxley replied, "All the more reason why a wall appears contradictory."

¶4. (C) Comment. While GOC officials were not enthusiastic in their defense of Bachelet's comparison to the Berlin Wall, they find the border fence hard to accept. OAS officials noted Chile's role at the OAS conference in softening the language in the OAS declaration, and the GOC played a similar role in Uruguay. We will continue to put the border issue and the continued openness of the U.S. in the broader context of legal versus illegal immigration.
KELLY